

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, March 6, 1892, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Piazza d' Azeglio 12 bis. March 6th, 1892. My darling Alec,

Words will not express the delight with which the children and I received your most interesting journal. I had begun to think I wasn't going to have any letter at all it was so long in coming, and I was feeling very much disappointed. I am already beginning to feel homesick and half wish I had gone with you. If you could only have remained another fortnight or even week so that I could get a governess for the children I think I would have gone. I hate to think of you all alone in Boston. It is a comfort to know that you are still safe on board the steamer and not doing yourself any harm by overworking even if as is probable you are overeating! Which is the worst?

About Mr. McCurdy's staying and escorting us home. It would be a very great comfort to have him with us on the steamer. I should not only have a better time, but I should feel that in case of disaster we would have at least a fighting chance for life which I would not feel we had alone. But since we have staid I do not think we ought to leave until we have accomplished what we staid for, and I cannot do that very well if we sail sooner than the 9th or the 16th. I believe Mr. McCurdy has arranged to sail somewhere about the 20th of March. Is it worth while keeping him away from you so much the longer? He ought to be of use to you in Boston, if he stays until April you will be just going to Baddeck and might as well not have a secretary. Undoubtedly I should be thankful for his company crossing, 2 and so I see would the children, but is it worth what it will cost? Beside I should feel more comfortable to know him with you in Boston. You are no more able to take care of yourself there than Elsie. Mr. McCurdy may not be able to do much, but still he ought to do something. I really cannot see how you are going to manage all alone for so long a

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time. To mention the smallest things, who will look after your washing and your mending? I wrote Papa urging him to come abroad and bring Mamma and Grace. I feel that this is the best thing for them. I can't bear to think of having Mamma touched by any but the highest skill, and surely that is to be found best in London or Paris. If she would come over I proposed to stay until after they came, and if the operation is performed then to stay until it was over and Mamma well, and then to leave the children with her and their governess and go home to you, returning with you for the Genoa congress. If I could leave the children here I could go with you to the Association meeting whenever it is, and after the way you overworked yourself last year I am very anxious to be with you this time. I am sure that I can at least assure you quieter nights if I were with you. I could do this more easily if the children were here with Mamma than if we were at home, because any place except Beinn Bhreagh would be too hot and I would not like to leave them there alone.

I would not be willing to stay abroad after the 16th of April unless Mamma came over, but if she came over I would feel that I would hardly gain much by returning with the children. Beinn Bhreagh is not the place for them in the last of April and first of May, so we should only be alone in Washington while you went North. Afterwards we would be alone in Baddeck while you went after the Assoc., and 3 later if you came over here. So that as far as getting any real comfort out of you we might as well stay here. I have told Papa to cable me whether he will come or not and will be guided by his decision and yours. Only of course if Mamma is well I must return to you for the Assoc., I should not mind leaving the children. Grace and her family could not travel much and Elsie is perfectly well so long as she is not excited and overfatigued. She has been all right ever since you left, no trouble about her tongue or any sign of nervousness. This morning and yesterday I splashed cold water over her after her bath, and I think this is really what Dr. Weir Mitchell meant when he talked of her daily sponging. Then she and Daisy are going on with their exercises together quite regularly and are interested in their Italian lessons, so that altogether they are in the best surroundings. I wish I could feel that you were, your life is far more precious than ours.

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I have done nothing of interest since coming here. I was tired out and have been glad to do nothing. I have however, been guilty of a bit of extravagance, I have ordered a silver chatelaine watch for myself and am looking for a chatelaine to hang it to, I really had to have something none of our watches are going, and I am afraid to entrust mine to a watchmaker of whom I know nothing. The one who tried to fix Daisy's ruined it.

I wonder how you like your fellow passengers on further acquaintance. We were all interested in your marquis and your Southerner. Has he provoked any more encounters with you? It is so nice knowing something of the people by whom you are surrounded. I have just written Augusta offering to send her a cheque for fifty 4 dollars if she can use it for my cousins the Gillettes and saying I would be glad to advance them any money they might require before their return home. They are my own 1st cousins, though I have never seen them since our marriage, and they have had a very hard time, with one dying of consumption and both the others sick in bed. I am sure you will think I have done right, their need is at least as great as Mrs. Burton's and except Lina and Augusta I am their nearest relation here.

Lovingly always, Mabel. I have written Mr. McCurdy what I have told you about his staying, and saying that I would like to wait as long as might be before deciding whether I would permit him to remain or not so as to give you time to get settled in Boston and find out whether you required him or not. Then I would cable you.